



OHIO PUBLIC LIBRARY INFORMATION NETWORK

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May 30, 2007

Ms. Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Portals II, Room TW-A325
Washington, DC 20554

Re: Reply Comments
Inquiry Concerning the Deployment of Advanced Telecommunications Capability
GN Docket No. 07-45

Dear Ms. Dortch:

These reply comments support the Comments of the American Library Association (ALA) in this proceeding (document ID 6519411688). I am Stephen Hedges, Executive Director of the Ohio Public Library Information Network (OPLIN), a compact state government organization providing Ohioans with Internet access to their public libraries and to selected commercial information databases.

The ALA submitted comments in this proceeding because libraries need broadband connections to the Internet, but struggle with the cost and availability of such connections, especially in rural and tribal areas. I would add that libraries need broadband connections that are based on *current* fiber-optic technologies, such as so-called "Ethernet" services, in which case their struggles become even more acute.

As the ALA noted, about 98% of public libraries nationwide provide some form of Internet access. In Ohio, the situation at first glance seems to be better, since almost 100% of public library buildings have some sort of broadband connection to the Internet. Ohio's public libraries offer almost 10,000 public computers connected to the Internet, computers which are heavily used by all types of people in the community, for Internet services ranging from e-mail to e-government. In many small and rural communities, the library has the only broadband connection in town.

Yet the ALA also noted that only 45% of public libraries nationwide are satisfied with their level of broadband connectivity. In Ohio, we are frustrated to see broadband telecommunications companies focusing their development efforts on implementing and improving fiber-optic service in cities ("Metro Ethernet") without offering any such service in rural communities, where so many of our library buildings are located. Without some sort of government pressure on these companies, they will continue to be guided only by the economic pressures of the marketplace, and many of our libraries will continue to languish on old broadband technologies.

For these reasons, OPLIN supports the ALA's suggestion that the FCC should encourage the public providers of broadband connectivity to have more consideration for the needs of public libraries, which serve all our communities regardless of location. We would like to find a way for the broadband providers in Ohio to work with us to find solutions to our broadband issues. That may not happen, however, unless the FCC and other government entities step up and encourage broadband providers to consider the important needs of *all* the public libraries that struggle daily to provide public Internet access in their communities.

Thank you for your efforts in this regard.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stephen Hedges". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Executive Director